NORTHEAST AFRICA SERIES
Vol. VII No. 2
(United Arab Republic)

American Universities Field Staff

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THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC TODAY

Part II: From Suez to Aswan

by Charles F. Gallagher

Cairo
January 15, 1960

"We are on the threshold of the realization of our supreme objectives."

Al Gumhuriya (January 5, 1960)

At a great moment of history the silence is chilling. It was this kind of tension which gripped the vast audience that stood without a sound in the warm January sun near the small, dusty town of Aswan in Upper Egypt last Saturday, just before President Nasser pushed the button which exploded a charge of dynamite and inaugurated work on the largest dam in the world. Everyone in attendance seemed to understand the meaning of the occasion, and throughout all Egypt there was a respectful attention, broken finally by the roar of four thousand tons of black rock when m-minute arrived at 13:48. Then a hoarse cheer went up and lingered for a moment. But there was a conspicuous calmness in the jubilation; the smiles and delighted murmurs of the crowd were almost secret, as is Egyptian custom, and there was no dancing in the streets, no fireworks in Cairo. Pride required that the event be taken in stride.

A few weeks before the opening of the High Dam the first in a triptych of ceremonies that pointed up this quietly self-confident mood of the United Arab Republic ushered in the "holiday season."

[CFG-2-'60]

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It was the address by President Nasser, on December 23, marking the third anniversary of the withdrawal of British and French troops from Port Said. The celebration of the "victory of Port Said" has become in the past three years in Egypt an important part of the legend aimed at erasing from memory any thoughts of what really happened at Suez. As the editorialist of Al Gumhuriya wrote on the eve of the Aswan inauguration:

> It is not today that we laid the first stone of this gigantic project. We already laid this stone in another town, a town brave above all others, which is called Port Said. It rose up to face the squadrons and armies come not only to seize the canal, but to prevent the building of the dam.

Thus the connection has been constantly drawn between the successful resistance of 1956 and the economic progress which will flow out of the 1960's, and in the minds of most Egyptians one is completely dependent on the other. In the minds of the regime, too, this was the logical order, for it was only after Egypt was politically free that it could become economically powerful.

As President Nasser spoke for almost two hours to his Port Said audience, however, he had good reason to consider that the invasion of 1956 had ended in an Egyptian victory. His broad smile and the relaxed openness of his manner may not have been due so much to reminiscences of the campaign upon which he dwelt in his speech, as it was to the news he had just received of the decision of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to grant the United Arab Republic a $56,500,000 loan for improving and deepening the Suez Canal. Near him, at the entrance to the canal were two testimonies to the course events had followed since the invasion. One was the barren site of the monument where once stood the figure of Ferdinand de Lesseps, toppled by the enraged citizens of the canal city after the retreat of the foreign armies, and now scheduled to be replaced--in an interesting hearkening back to Egypt's Pharaonic past--by a statue of the Middle Kingdom ruler, Sesostris III. The other was the Danish ship, "Inge Toft," idling in the roadstead since May 21 with a cargo of Israeli cement and potash, and a newly-arrived Greek freighter carrying an Israeli cargo bound for French Somaliland. Both ships were victims of the new UAR policy of denying access to the canal to all vessels carrying Israeli goods, a policy which, in view of the World Bank's favorable decision on the loan, now seemed to be succeeding.

The Bank announcement carefully eschewed any mention of politics. An increase in the flow of oil and the general interest of world trade were given as the compelling reasons for its agreement, but no one, either in Egypt or abroad, was so naive as to believe that politics can be separated from economics in this still very touchy region. The loan was made not only over the strong protests of the Israeli Government, but against the recommendation of 66 Members of Congress who asked the Bank to withhold action until Egypt allowed Israeli goods to pass through the canal. When one remembers how

different was American reaction to financial undertakings with Egypt under similar pressure three years before, at the time of the original United States offer for the High Dam, one sees how much water has, to distort the metaphor, flowed through the canal.

It is undeniable that the loan responds to a serious economic need. It will deepen the canal by two feet and allow an increase in the size of ships that can be accommodated from 35,000 to 45,000 dead-weight tons. However, the Bank limited its action by suggesting that further enlargements, including the possible double-tracking of the canal by connecting the present bypass points, were unwarranted at the present time. In support of its action the Bank pointed out: "In 1958 at least one trip through the Canal was made by more than one-third of all ocean-going vessels and three-fifths of all oil tankers of over 4,000 gross tons. Traffic through the canal has grown steadily and now amounts to 18,000 ships and 140 million tons of cargo a year, of which 70 per cent is oil, mainly from the Middle East."

But opponents of the loan were unimpressed by these arguments. Economically they argued against the likelihood of a significant rise in traffic in coming years, partly because of the increased use of supertankers avoiding the canal, partly because the discovery of large-scale oil fields in Algeria and Libya stands to reduce Europe's dependence on canal-transited oil. And politically, they claimed that so long as President Nasser's policies toward Israel were allowed to continue, freedom of navigation as promised by him, and as carried out for a period after the 1956 invasion, was not being implemented.

There is no doubt that Egyptian policies on transit for Israeli goods have hardened as Nasser felt himself becoming stronger. For over two years after Suez, merchandise to and from Israel went through the canal without a hitch. Then came the case of the "Inge Toft," which remains unsettled despite long negotiations between the owners, consigners, and the Egyptian Government. Finally, after the intervention of Secretary-General Hammarskjold, a formula was worked out under which goods to and from Israel could pass if they were dispatched as the property of the non-Israeli sellers or buyers, and, according to Israeli statements, informal assurances had been given them by Mr. Hammarskjold that there would be no interference in these cases.

Under these circumstances World Bank participation--and most important to Egyptian thinking, the taking up of a $5 million share in the loan by nine banks, most of them American, without a World Bank guarantee--cannot be confined to normal considerations of financial responsibility and security. The impression in Egyptian government circles at any rate is that a definite nod of approval was given by American financial interests, and those whom the Egyptians think behind them, to the Nasser regime.

The next question is: If so, why? The answer, in part, can be found first by looking down to the other end of Egypt at Aswan and reflecting that the

High Dam has now been begun with the participation of Russian technicians and money, not to speak of the numerous other industrial projects which have gotten under way with Soviet assistance. Nasser himself had avowedly made the canal improvement loan a test of Western intentions, convinced as he was that Israel's dispatch of a blockade-runner at the last minute was a frantic attempt to force a backdown on the tentative agreement. Another part of the answer certainly stems from the sound financial policy lately pursued by the highly capable Minister of National Economy, Abdel Moneim Kaissouni. The tireless efforts he has made, first to secure settlements on all financial questions outstanding since Suez, and then to reintegrate the Egyptian economy in a more balanced fashion with that of the hard currency world after the standstill in trade relations that marked 1957, has inspired confidence in nearly every foreign financial expert and businessman who has come to Cairo recently. But most of the answer is, as always, involved in world politics, and concerns the general pattern of Egyptian international behavior in the three years since Suez.

As Nasser surveyed the post-Suez situation he could find three possible sources of international support. World opinion and the United Nations had played a leading role in saving him militarily, but their aid was largely moral and confined to specific tasks, even, in some instances, given with the back of the hand. The UN Emergency Force would police the frontier and UN-sponsored engineers would dislodge the debris of the canal, but it would not put him on his feet financially, nor would it assist in breaking the economic embargo still being used by the West to try to topple him. The United States was an alternative he must briefly have considered. American stock was for a very short period after the invasion high, and Nasser had paid public tribute to United States behavior during the crisis. Any hopes he might have entertained for a bettering of relations with America, however, were soon eliminated. United States opinion had been divided over its Government's action; the moral stand had clashed with a deep-seated suspicion that Nasser was a Soviet puppet up to no good. Morality had prevailed but, having done so, it seemed to have the effect of persuading the State Department that it was now free to give vent to its reserves by showing that its Suez gesture had been no more than would have had to be extended to any victim of international aggression, no matter how distasteful he might be. And the series of vexatious measures which America adopted, from continuing to block Egyptian currency, refusing to sell surplus wheat, and suspending distribution of relief supplies, appeared to be designed to point up the distastefulness. They were all the more irritating to Egypt because of their pointlessness after the fact.

Finally in the early spring of 1957 came the supreme blunder of American Middle East policy, comparable in many ways to the British error in sponsoring the Baghdad Pact two springs before. For just as the British had gained considerable credit by withdrawing from the Canal Zone in mid-1954 only to throw it away a few months later, so America squandered whatever good will was left to her in Egypt--manifestly, it must be admitted, not caring at that

point--by setting out to establish an Arab policy which would ignore Egypt and Nasser, a policy in the long run as ridiculous as it would be for Egypt to have based a North American policy on Canada and Mexico.

There were two approaches. In one, having apparently accepted the vacuum theory propounded by Britain, American statesmen called for an American presence in the Middle East to supersede that of England and France. This led to the enunciation of the Eisenhower Doctrine early in 1957 and the dispatch of the ill-fated Richards Mission. America was to save the Arab world from communism, and by implication Nasserism, regardless of Arab desires, or of Arab feelings about new interference in their affairs, or about the primacy in Arab eyes of the need to be saved from Israel, not to mention from the West itself. The Richards expedition went out with about $200 million in change, a pitifully small sum if one were seriously engaged in a shopping tour, especially considering that the Soviet Union was then offering nearly that amount to one Arab country alone, Syria. The mission's lack of success was notable. Only Lebanon, in the Arab Middle East, could be persuaded to accept the plan, and the sad fruits of its acceptance were soon seen in the growing restiveness in that country, where the opposition was railing against such pro-Western entanglements, which led to the revolution of May 1958. Tunisia went along with the general idea but complained bitterly about the pittance offered to it, and Jordan made a point of accepting military aid only so long as it did not fall within the framework of the Doctrine itself.

The cornerstone of American policy was to be Saudi Arabia, in the second approach. With oil resources, American investment on a large scale, and a military transit base, it seemed to fill the bill. Moreover, Saud, like many Arab leaders in 1957, was having his difficulties with revolutionary Nasserism, some of the tenets of which he considered far too dangerous for his own kingdom. And Saud was little averse to being marked out as a leader around whom the Arabs would rally; he could easily be persuaded to think of himself in that light. The problem was that the vast majority of urban, educated Arabs who make up the core of modern Arab nationalism, had no intention of accepting him in it. For them, in default of anyone else, and despite occasional reservations which some had, Nasser was the only man to fill the role. After much fanfare, including a visit by Saud to the United States, but little result, the basic unsoundness of this whole effort came out in 1958 when Saudi Arabia, internally almost bankrupt, and in semidisgrace with most other Arab states, quietly retired from the scene to undergo a thorough housecleaning and a reshuffling of responsibility within the royal family in an attempt to save its own skin.

In view of this trend in American policy, Nasser could only hold fast to his ideas about Arab nationalism, according to which the United States was now bullying the Middle East and trying to divide the Arabs just as England and France had before. Accordingly he vituperated the Eisenhower Doctrine, the Richards Mission, the emergency military aid to Jordan (airlifted in so

flamboyant a fashion that the Jordanian Government itself, hard pressed by a threatened nationalist uprising, was embarrassed), and any Arab Government or leader--Saud, Nuri, Bourguiba--who allowed himself to be "bought by imperialism." For Nasser the issue was still whether the Arabs were to be free to decide their own future, and in mid-1957 it did not look to him as though America were going to permit them.

His other source of support was of course the Soviet Union, which was now seemingly in the position it had long and skillfully sought. Certainly 1957 marked the high-water point of Egypto-Soviet co-operation on all levels, but there is evidence that even at this period Nasser was not eager to fall completely within the Communist embrace. The year was one in which he took no spectacular initiative--he was no longer defiantly seeking a quarrel with the West even if he responded, as always, with a snarl when aroused. He felt physically more secure after Suez, which had convinced him that military measures would not be allowed to prevail against him. The presence of UN troops on his frontier with Israel guaranteed safety there, and it was pretty clear in 1957 that boundaries in the Middle East could not be changed by force. Therefore he had little to lose by waiting, mending his fences, restoring his depleted military strength bit by bit, and putting together his badly-bent financial structure by accepting Communist-bloc aid as long as it was without strings, at least, without obvious strings. His ban on internal Communists continued in force, something which puzzled even those in the West who considered him a tool of Moscow, although some theorized that this was just part of the master plot designed to deceive the outside world.

Actually his suspicion of communism as a political force in the Arab world had never diminished, and it was the gradual drift of Syria into the murky fringeland of real Communist domination in the late summer of 1957 which started Nasser's almost unnoticed shift into reverse gear in relations with the East. Syria had remained close to Egypt when many other Arab countries were lukewarm. It was, like Nasser's regime, a revolutionary republic with bitter memories of foreign occupation. It felt threatened, probably more than any other Arab state, by Israel; it was uneasy with Western-dominated Iraq and its periodically revived Fertile Crescent scheme; and it looked askance at Hashimite Jordan and Saudi Arabia as retrograde monarchies. Syria was as much or more involved in technical and financial co-operation with the Soviet Union as was Egypt, and by midsummer talk of Syria's possible drift into something like Communist satellite status had begun to alarm Cairo as much, but in a different way, as it did the West.

When the Syrian crisis with Turkey broke into the open, Nasser quite naturally rushed to the verbal defense of a sister Arab country. But, more than that, he saw an opportunity to counterbalance a Soviet influence which many Egyptians thought Syria less capable of resisting than was Egypt, by acceding to the Syrian invitation to send a token troop force to Latakia for the defense of Syria's borders. Once installed, in October, the Egyptian detachment

remained until union was decreed the following spring, and it is from that time that the cooling of Egyptian relations with the USSR must be marked. Non-Communist members of the Left-wing coalition which was ruling Syria had pushed the invitation to Egyptian forces, and Egyptian intelligence working with them knew that the Syrian Communist party was quite unhappy about the counterattraction that Nasser was now exerting, although Communist party publications were at the time very careful not to say a word against him.

The suddenness of the decision for union at the beginning of 1958 [cf. The State of the Union (CFG-5-'58), for details on its formation and first months of existence] surprised the Communists in Syria, and the manner in which all political parties were invited to disband after union, dismayed them. They hawed before giving in on this, but their leader, Khaled Bagdash, slipped quietly behind the Iron Curtain. The steady dismissal of Syrian army officers with Communist affiliations, or their transfer to Cairo or positions of no importance, further convinced the Communists that the game was up. They began to react clandestinely and Nasser reinforced his anti-Communist internal security precautions while still maintaining the most cordial relations with the Soviet Union on a government-to-government basis.

Things might have muddled on in this way for some time without much change, had it not been for the Iraqi Revolution in July 1958. In large part events in Iraq are explained by those in Syria. The loss of the latter had been a bitter blow to Arab Communists, and those in Iraq, as soon as they were able to function freely in the casual chaos that followed the establishment of the republic, moved with a boldness they might otherwise have concealed. Having seen the party's fate in Syria under Nasserian rule, they played strongly on Iraqi nationalist sentiment to ward off what they called a "premature" union with the United Arab Republic in those first weeks when Nasser welcomed the Iraqi revolutionaries and when it looked as if union were probable. The complex story of the coalition of genuine Iraqi nationalists (as opposed to pan-Arab, Ba'ath, or Nasserite nationalists) and the Kurdish nationalists and the Communists properly belongs in a description of Iraq, but Nasser soon saw that if some Iraqis were moved by a sincere feeling that they were not yet ready to join the UAR, the Arab Communists were not only maliciously blocking cooperation, but were beginning to stir up trouble in his own Northern Region backyard, using Iraq as a base.

This activity was in Nasser's eyes Russian-inspired, and outside interference by the Soviet Union could not be tolerated any more than British, French, or American maneuvering would have been. Nasser went into action with one of his characteristic, violent speeches in December 1958 denouncing the Communists as enemies of Arab nationalism and equating them in that respect with Zionists; nothing worse could be said about them to an Arab audience. Also characteristic was the action of his police who made massive arrests among the extreme Left. The move had been bold and blunt; but it had compromised to the degree of not yet naming the Soviet Union directly. Now Nasser sat back to await repercussions.

The Soviet Union had never of course been naive about Nasser in the Western manner. It had long been prepared for eventual difficulties with him and the Communists in Lebanon, for example, as early as the spring of 1958 had standing instructions merely to "suggest" whenever convenient that there was no true democracy in the United Arab Republic "without openly attacking Nasser"--he was still too popular for that. Now, with the "declaration of war" made by Nasser, they were under fewer restraints and their comments became in 1959, for the first time since the old pre-Bandung, pre-Czech days, openly hostile, until they reached their present level of violent castigation of Nasser as a bloody tyrant.

The position of the Soviet Government was more nuancé. It had to be because it was publicly committed at this point to so many industrialization projects in the United Arab Republic, headed by the High Dam agreement formalized late in 1958. Even before that, one Egyptian summed up the situation in May by saying, "It's a question of who gets more out of whom, and so far I don't think we've done badly." For the USSR to renounce its commitments was unthinkable except under the gravest provocation; for it had long realized, as the West was only beginning to in 1958, that Egypt, like India, was a case by which its sincerity would be judged in many lands. It might with impunity trifle with smaller countries, rudely call off visits with Scandinavian states, alternate bluster and cajolery with Iran, or play an on-again, off-again game with Yugoslavia, excusing its performance on intraideological grounds, but the repercussions of backing out of formal agreements with so crucial a country as Egypt, which most of the uncommitted nations had looked up to as a model of anticolonialist deportment, would have been enormous. In one breath it would have given the lie to Russian claims of disinterested help to poorer countries with differing social systems.

There was thus little for the Soviets to do but grin and bear it. At one point in the spring of last year Mr. Khrushchev's temper got loose to the point of categorizing President Nasser as a "hot-headed young man," in a superb example of psychiatric projection, but this attitude was subsequently mollified in a statement in which the USSR disclaimed any attempt at communizing the Arab world and even ingenuously added that in its opinion the ensemble of Arab states was not ready for communism at this time. (This was widely interpreted as an aside to Iraqi Communists, warning them against premature action to establish communism in one Arab state at the expense of dividing the Arab world, but it is one thing to direct the movement from afar and another to be a local Arab Communist, part-idealist, part-opportunist, wanting to come to power and being not too willing to wait forever for the go-ahead signal from Moscow.)

The gradual disentanglement of the revolutionary regime from the Eastern bloc was bound to have compensations sooner or later in its relations with the West. They were not immediate or overt; that was impossible because feeling was still too bitter. Even if it was true, which it was not, or even if

Nasser had thought so, which he did not, it would have been out of the question to announce to the Arabs that America had always had their best interests at heart, that England was after all an old friend, a kind uncle with whom there had been momentary misunderstandings, or that France was now practicing a new kind of fraternité with Arab nationalism, particularly in Algeria. Nasser's principles had not varied, nor had his opinion of the West fundamentally, and the sudden discovery that he was not irremediably pro-Eastern did not mean that he was ipso facto pro-Western. To have made any sudden change would have been to destroy himself as a champion of Arabism and everything he has fought for. In his eyes all other interests were and are secondary to Arab interests as he sees them, and in a speech early in 1959 he summed up his philosophy and his disillusionment in a remarkably frank way by noting that, "We Arab nationalists have no friends." Well, in 1960 that may still be true literally, but one can say that the United Arab Republic at least has a lot of acquaintances.

However, Nasser was given the opportunity through 1959 to rectify a position which he felt, according to a good many Egyptian sources, had become unbalanced. It involved taking some risks, for the UAR might be dropped between two chairs at just the wrong moment. And it took skillful handling not only by him, but by American diplomacy as well. And to the credit of the latter, let it be said that a serious and significant accommodation has been made, without involving the sacrifice of any basic American principles either.

There was a halting beginning as early as the spring of 1958, when this correspondent was in Egypt. Relations were then cool but correct and there was promise that they could be bettered. The United States no longer regarded Nasser as an enfant terrible, but as someone to be lived with. It had been recognized that union with Syria had probably saved that country from other worse calamities, and in view of the difficulties that King Saud had gotten himself into, in the case of his alleged participation in a plot to assassinate Nasser, there was really no one else to talk with in the Middle East.

This rapprochement was shaken in midsummer by the outbreak of the troubles in Lebanon, and the American landings there after the Iraqi revolution in July strained all the incipient good will almost to the breaking point. Once again caught in mid-crisis on his way back from Yugoslavia (which he was continuing to cultivate assiduously) Nasser retorted by flying off to Moscow. It was a security move, for perhaps the Americans had really gone mad, he thought, and he had to protect himself against further unforeseeable military moves. But, given his as yet unpublicized difficulties with Moscow, he did not want to commit himself irrevocably, and as the situation in Lebanon developed he took another look at American action. Unofficial contact and explanation in Cairo convinced him that it was not so villainous as he had at first thought and it was with his approval that an all-Arab solution to the problem was worked out at the United Nations. Tension diminished even further when the compromise solution, installing a neutral president and an ex-rebel, pro-Nasserite Prime Minister,

was allowed to go into effect while American troops were still in the country.

The Americans on their side had learned something by landing in Lebanon--travel does broaden. They found that it was not the wisest policy to back an unpopular regime by money and guns and that Lebanon, and everyone else, would be better off allowed to regain the closer-to-center position it had traditionally kept within the Arab world and in its relations between the Arabs and the West. And the Americans had seen that Nasser was not the only, or even the primary, factor of disturbance there. And as Iraq deteriorated into near anarchy in the second half of the year, the United Arab Republic looked more and more like a solid rock in a chaotic sea, all the more so because one could now deal with Nasser as the principal power in the Middle East without having to offend Nuri and the vanished regime in Baghdad.

Thus when 1959 dawned with Nasser busily engaged in his roundup of local Communists, American policy was quite ready to see him in a new light. And bit by bit, without commotion, it began to extend the hand of co-operation. By the end of the year considerable progress was made in a quiet way. In the past twelve months a technical co-operation program has gotten under way in the amount of $140 million, and several deals have provided American surplus agricultural products worth another $114 million, payable in local currency, the monies to be allotted to development schemes and educational exchanges with the UAR. A credit of about $50 million was advanced for the enlargement of a fertilizer factory and the purchase of diesel locomotives. American interests are to co-operate in setting up a television network in Egypt, a large American drug company is now establishing a plant to manufacture pharmaceuticals, and the Ford Foundation has just announced several grants to the UAR. It is understood that American loans will now be offered for dry dock facilities in Alexandria as well as for chemical and paper factories. Even in the Northern Region (Syria), always more xenophobic and cloistered, surplus grain shipments from the United States have been arranged for nearly $10 million. Half of the payment for these will be reserved for economic development loans in the Syrian region and a quarter will be made available for loans to private Syrian companies through the Export-Import Bank.

On Nasser's part the thaw has likewise been quiet and decorous. Attacks on the United States by Radio Cairo have been stopped, and the educational exchanges now begun can be correlated with a steady shift of UAR students who had been sent to Iron Curtain countries between 1955-59 back to institutions in Western countries. (Many of them had complained of language difficulties, but others found Communist life unsympathetic, and there have been difficulties, like those in Bulgaria recently where Egyptian students were admonished not to act like "hooligans" by the official Bulgarian press.)

The highest congratulations, however, certainly go for the discretion shown in the skipping of the Middle East on President Eisenhower's recent trip to India and other countries. There might well have been a rousing reception

here--it could have been arranged if the regime so desired, but some of it would have been spontaneous in view of the Eisenhower stand at Suez. But a counsel of prudence prevailed wisely. As a prominent Egyptian said meaningfully, "I think it is just a little early for the President of the United States to be visiting the United Arab Republic." In any event, such a visit would also have been out of the question a year before elections.

When the World Bank loan was announced at the end of December, then, Nasser's two cups were both brimming over. His preoccupation (now reiterated in every public statement) with raising the living standards in the UAR had seemingly convinced the West of the sincerity of his new attitude, although to him it is not new, just the logical continuation of a consistent stand which had never stopped striving for the basic goals of the revolution.

Looking at the political developments of the past few years, can one say that Nasser has matured? For those who used to think of him as the evil young genius of the Arab world, the thought is alluring. Or is it that he has finally "learned something about communism?" For those who considered him a naive tool of Moscow this is the easiest answer. Certainly he is older, and he has aged not only in years. His physical appearance alone says much; it is very different from the time when he was an open-shirted, uniform-wearing, fire-eating colonel. Now quite gray, in fact white at the temples, at forty-two (today, Janaury 15, is his birthday), he wears rather well-cut single-breasted sack suits, with lapels slightly too wide, that disguise the comfortable middle-aged spread he is developing. Surrounded by civilians rather than brother officers, he is clearly mellower in public, where his smile seems more natural and fatherly than the artificial grin on the "Big Brother" posters of yesteryear that unfortunately still adorn so many walls. In private he has always been something of a charmer and there are few visitors whom he has not managed to win over after a person-to-person chat in his office. One feels that his stature has changed, too, with the people; if there is not the blind frenzy of hero-worship that acclaimed him, especially between the Czech arms purchases of 1955 and Suez, (and I remember that by the time of his return from the Soviet Union in May 1958 that was toned down) then, in compensation, one finds many more thoughtful Egyptians of the middle-class and above who now feel much warmer toward him and admit with a candor that does not seem to be lip-service that they may have been mistaken about him before.

Nasser has changed, but the greatest danger would be to conclude that he has changed any of his fundamental beliefs. His background, his army training, and the long, bitter struggle he has gone through politically all combine to keep him on guard against both foreign entanglement and domestic opposition. If the fact that he regards the Eastern bloc with a cool eye does not mean that he will fall back into Western arms, then neither does the conscious use of Islam as a weapon against "atheistic communism" as it is now steadily referred to here mean that he has any intention of tolerating a return of the ultrareligious Muslim Brotherhood or anything like it. He believes in himself, probably more

than ever, and he is proud of his ability in steering the middle course between rival imperialisms, just as he has treaded warily between the excesses of secularization and a neoreligious crusade. In 1954, when the attempt on his life was made, he said: "What is Nasser but one man among many. If he lives or dies the revolution will go on." The revolution would certainly go on now, if Nasser were to die, but chances are it would not go on as smoothly or as efficiently, because there is no one to take his place and command the universal respect he now has from his fellow citizens. Chances are that he knows this, too, and so ponders in lonely moments the dilemma of all strong men, that of arranging an orderly succession. Given his age, however, and the solidity of his position, it will be a long time before that problem has to be faced.

As Nasser stood at Aswan last week he must have felt the full surge of pride in the accomplishments of his revolution. The assembled diplomatic corps was at his side to pay tribute and hundreds of correspondents from all the world had beaten a path to Egypt to witness the event. Next to him, as mute evidence of his ability to command continuing Soviet co-operation, was Ignaty Novikov, Soviet Minister of Power Construction. As symbols of one of his next, as yet unrealized goals, that of further Arab unity, perhaps in a new context, he was flanked by Muhammad V, King of Morocco, on a state visit, and by Shukri al Kuwatly, ex-President of Syria now designated as the "First Arab Citizen." Also inconspicuously present, after having asked at the last minute to attend and having been given permission, was the recently arrived British chargé de mission. If Nasser had wanted to taste revenge at that moment, which was doubtful in view of his offer to co-operate on a plane of equality with all countries, it could not have been sweeter.

The consecration ceremony was short. A box full of documents relating to the inauguration of construction was placed in a granite block, together with a copy of the Quran, and coins from the Northern and Southern Regions, and from Morocco. Nasser's opening words were simple and moving:

> "Praise be to God. This is the High Dam, your own High Dam for which you have waited so long and worked so hard and for which the entire Arab nation with all its peoples has struggled to see become a concrete reality."

Listening all around him as he spoke on, was a sea of Egyptians who had come to acclaim this accomplishment and their leader. Egypt, the land of venerable monuments, was about to add still another one to its impressive roster. But how different from the Pyramids, or the nearby colossi at Abu Simbel which are themselves threatened with obliteration by the waters of the new lake, is the spirit of the High Dam and the new electric power station at Aswan. Unlike the sterile grandeur of those objects of death, these new works contain a life-giving touch which will enhance the existence of everyone in this country.

Charles F Gallagher